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Governor's Budget to Invest in Rural Wisconsin

(Madison) – Rep. Mary Czaja (R-Irma) issued the following statement after Governor Scott Walker announced new 2015-17 state budget initiatives targeted to help the state's rural areas. The proposals were unveiled this week as part of the Governor's *Grow the Economy in Rural Wisconsin* priority agenda.

“The special focus the Governor has given to rural issues is good news for our northern communities. Due to simple geography, we have to be creative with solutions for our healthcare system, our technology and broadband infrastructure, and in training our workforce. The priorities the Governor has identified for the state budget will make a real and tangible difference.

“I am especially encouraged to see the additional investments and flexibilities that are proposed for rural schools. The Governor listened to the recommendations that we brought forward from the Speaker's Task Force on Rural Schools, and specifically has worked to address the high costs of transportation and technology that our rural districts face. With 44% of Wisconsin students attending school in a rural classroom, this is a sound investment in the future workforce of our state.

“I look forward to getting a more detailed look at the Governor's proposals and his overall budget in the days and weeks ahead, and I will continue to advocate for rural Wisconsin as a member of the Joint Committee on Finance.”

The following task force recommendations were included in the Governor's plan:

- Increase funding for transportation aid to school districts
- Increase funding for sparsity aid to school districts
- Allow school districts to reduce costs by whole grade sharing agreements
- Invest in broadband expansion grants to the benefit of both schools and workforce
- Expand the Technology for Educational Achievement (TEACH) program
- Allow flexibility in teacher licensing to bring tech ed curriculum to rural districts

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